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FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0016

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000086

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV EU IR IS RU SU SW

SUBJECT: SWEDISH OPPOSITION LEADER ON PARTY'S FUTURE, IRAN,
GAZA, AND RUSSIA

REF: 08 STOCKHOLM 848

Classified By: CDA Robert Silverman for reasons 1.4 (B) & (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Senior career diplomat, UN mediator and Social Democratic Party (SDP) elder Jan Eliasson met with CDA on February 8 to discuss the Transatlantic Partnership, Iran, Israel, Russia and Swedish domestic politics. He made the following points:

-- U.S. and EU should deepen relations by tackling key global issues, such as poverty and climate change;
-- The EU and U.S. should jointly approach Iran, and consider bringing Russia into the dialogue;
-- Eliasson is close to SDP leader Mona Sahlin and a potential foreign minister if the SDP coalition wins the September 2010 elections.

End Summary.

Deeper Transatlantic Partnership

-- Eliasson stressed the importance of deepening the U.S.-EU relationship to tackle key global issues, such disease, poverty, organized crime, climate change and conflict prevention. By cooperating on these topics, the EU and U.S. would give an "ethical dimension" to the Partnership, while "repairing some of the damage" that has been done to the U.S.' reputation.

-- Eliasson added that his party, the SDP, has strong ties to European social democratic parties; SDP leader Mona Sahlin is "very close" with German FM Steinmeier. The SDP is poised to influence key European party leaders to support EU-U.S. cooperation.

Darfur

-- From 2006 to July 1, 2008, Eliasson served as UN Special Envoy to Darfur. He still sees Secretary General Ban Ki Moon as an informal advisor and continues to receive pertinent briefings and materials.

-- Things are not going well in Darfur, Eliasson said, and the Chad-Sudan conflict has undermined the possibility of reaching a resolution on Darfur due to border issues. The parties in the Darfur conflict have shown "zero political will" to resolve the conflict. The Darfur opposition remains fragmented and unable to coordinate positions.

-- At least half of the displaced person in the camps will remain, he posited, as the people have lived in the camps too long and turned them into suburbs. During his tenure he noticed an increased "bitterness and militancy" among the youth who grew up in the camps.

Iran: bring in Russia

-- Eliasson supports dialogue and "groups of Europeans" in contact with the Iranian government. He said Ahmadinejad is "irrational and unpredictable" and lamented that former President Khatami's attempt to open up to the West in 2002-03 failed.

-- The only possible way to get out of the predicament, he said, is for the U.S. and EU to cooperate in a dialogue with Iran, using a strategy of both sticks and carrots.

-- Eliasson said it would be even more advantageous to form a tripartite with Russia to engage Iran. Russia would then "have a sense of ownership" and be more engaged. He said Iran needs reassurances from the West that it will not seek regime change.

Israel and Hamas: Both to Blame

-- On Gaza, Eliasson said both Israel and Hamas are to blame: Hamas provoked Israel and Israel "fell into the trap" by reacting. He added that the situation will become more problematic if Netanyahu wins the elections.

-- Asked about SDP party leader Mona Sahlin's participation at an anti-Israel protest under a Hamas flag, Eliasson said the press "played up" the situation. Eliasson stressed he is reaching out to Israelis in order to preserve SDP's ability to play a future role in the conflict's resolution.

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Russia Snubs FM Bildt

-- "Sweden has no illusions about the Russians," Eliasson said, adding that Sweden has been stalling approval of the Nordstream pipeline for three years.

-- But Eliasson claimed the Russians refuse to meet with FM Carl Bildt, other than in multilateral contexts like the EU Troika, due to Bildt's vocal condemnation last August of Russia's invasion of Georgia.

The Opposition Coalition

-- Eliasson subtly criticized the newly-formed "Red-Green Coalition" between the Social Democratic, Left and Green parties (reftel). The Left and Green parties, he said, should not have a role in defining SDP foreign and labor policy.

-- The SDP's new foreign policy advisory board is led by foreign policy spokesman Urban Ahlin and former FM Lena Hjelm-Wallen, both currently MPs. Eliasson said Hjelm-Wallen is "very good" and will not concede important SDP issues to the other coalition parties. One of the most contentious issues involves Swedish military involvement in Afghanistan, he noted; the SDP supports this on the whole, while the Left and Greens do not.

¶2. (C) Comment: The SDP leadership is working to bridge gaps with the Left and Greens on important foreign policy issues, all with an eye toward forging a common electoral platform for next year's parliamentary elections. If the opposition wins next summer, Eliasson would like the foreign minister portfolio again, and as former ambassador to Washington and president of the UNGA, he certainly has strong credentials. In the event of an SDP victory, Eliasson would face a strong challenge from SDP foreign policy spokesman Urban Ahlin. But he maintains close ties to SDP leader Sahlin -- she picked Eliasson and Swedish EU Commissioner Margot Wallstrom to head

her foreign policy advisory group two years ago -- and he continues to work closely with her, telling CDA he will ask for Post's help arranging meetings for Sahlin in Washington in the spring.

SILVERMAN